



Guidelines for Host Families for the Round Square Student Exchange Program

Thank you to you and your family for offering to be a host family for an exchange student from another international Round Square school. I am delighted that you are embracing this opportunity at Bishop Drutt College.

Host families play a vital role in the success and continued growth of our exchange program. Like yours, host families from Round Square schools all over the world open their homes and hearts to international exchange students in a demonstration of goodwill. We support the belief that education should prepare young people for life, by learning through challenge, service and adventure, growing principled and open-minded individuals.

To promote peace, co-operation and tolerance between nations, it is important to bring young people together from different cultures.

Hosting an international student means they will become a member of your family. As a homestay, it is your responsibility to provide them with a safe, supportive and welcoming home environment.

Honest and consistent communication is the key to a successful and enriching student exchange and host family experience. Although every effort will be made to match an exchange student and a host family, we cannot control every aspect of the international exchange experience. The following guidelines may help to ensure that all parties involved enjoy the exchange experience.

1. Communication

Communicate your family's expectations with the exchange student clearly at the beginning of their stay. I recommend early communication via email, Skype or by phone before arrival. They will be living in your home and your rules apply. Let them know what you expect in terms of tidiness, laundry, mealtimes, internet use, etc. You may also find it helpful to find out what they hope to achieve while staying with you.

2. Living arrangements.

It is important that you provide your exchange student with their own bedroom where they can keep their personal items and have personal time in a private space. This helps to ensure that the student and all members of your family do not feel that the experience is overwhelming or too intense. They will need a bed, study desk, chair, lighting and access to kitchen, laundry, and bathroom.

3. Encourage participation

Your visitor is here on an academic and cultural exchange and therefore is expected to be actively involved as much as possible in BDC academic classes, family/community-based activities and homework. One of the best ways for your student to settle in and make friends is to get them to join a lunchtime club, school sport or extra-curricular activity. BDC and the local area offer a variety of activities, such as the beach, music bands and orchestras, coding, debating, dance, drama, surfing, circus and sport. Find out what your student is interested in and help them to enrol.

4. Food and Meals

Most students are happy to eat Australian food each day, but some may particularly miss eating food such as rice or noodles if it has been a regular part of their diet at home. Please be sensitive and make provisions for any food allergies, religious observances and/or foods that may be unacceptable to their religion, culture, etc. Please ask them about their favourite foods in Australia and in their home country, or invite them to come shopping to choose mutually acceptable options.

Please note that fresh food items should constitute the bulk of cooking ingredients.

Lunch must be provided and could be a healthy sandwich and a piece of fruit, leftovers from the previous night's dinner, or a packed lunch that either the student or host makes.

Encourage a little independence in the kitchen. Some students may be shy about helping themselves to food in the fridge or pantry. Show them where items are kept and how to use the microwave and oven if they are preparing their own meal.

5. Money Matters and Banking

Depending on the length of their exchange, students may already have banking arrangements in place when they arrive. If not, their passport is needed to open an account. Students are encouraged not to carry large amounts of money nor store money in their rooms.

Under no circumstances should homestay family members borrow money from exchange students. You are also strongly discouraged from lending money to your student other than in exceptional circumstances.

Please pay for your exchange student when they are invited to join your family to dine in a restaurant or go out with you. However, it is not expected that you buy expensive items or pay for extra-curricular activities, such as music lessons, school trips, etc.

6. Telephone, SIM card, mobile phone

Generally, students bring their mobile phones with them and will need to buy an Australian SIM card. Some may already have an Australian SIM card. Phone numbers starting with '04' usually work in Australia. Please note, it is not advisable to open a mobile phone plan in your name for a student under 18. Skype, Face Time, WhatsApp or other similar communication services are a good option for communicating with family overseas at no cost.

7. Computer and internet

Students will require a computer for homework and to contact their family. Students require access to the internet at the host family home. Please be clear about usage rules for your home.

8. Medical insurance

All international students are required to have Overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC). Students staying for less than 10 weeks may be covered by their travel insurance instead of OSHC. OSHC will normally cover treatment by a doctor in hospital, at home or at the doctor's surgery. Homestay families are requested to assist their exchange student if they need to see a doctor. Explain that some doctors charge above the scheduled fee (i.e. require a gap payment) which is paid by the student.

In many Asian cultures it is usual to go to hospital when sick. Students should be discouraged from doing this and encouraged to see a GP instead. The student needs to pay for any medication that the doctor prescribes.

9. Security

Safekeeping of passport, travel documents and money / traveller's checks should be discussed with the exchange student upon arrival. It is recommended that you keep the passport and travel documents in a secure location.

10. Uniform

Exchange students are required to wear their own school uniform or a BDC uniform purchased from the BDC Midford Uniform Shop for the duration of their stay. In either case, uniform should be as is expected by the relevant school's dress code. Any deviation from their school's dress code or our own will be discussed at school.

11. Weekend activities

Encourage students to be part of your usual family weekend activities. These will be interesting to the student, as ordinary activities in every culture are different. As this is a cultural exchange this is your family's opportunity to 'show off' all that our region has to offer. Take the time to visit our many beautiful natural and cultural attractions: whale watching from local headlands, a picnic at the beach, see the kangaroos at Emerald Beach or Safety Beach, Bellingen and Coffs Markets, National Parks, local art galleries, the Marine Science Centre... just to mention a few starting places.

12. Communication with the home parents.

If you are ever in doubt about the suitability of anything regarding the safety, health and/or welfare of your exchange student, please contact their family directly to discuss the options and/or actions. All decisions should be taken with the family's consent and BDC should be informed.

13. Resolving Concerns.

Experience has taught us that open communication between all parties involved (host, student, parents and school staff) smooths the transition and prevents or solves misunderstandings. Please do not hesitate to ask any questions. We stress that each placement is unique, every host family and international student have their own character.

In the event of a dispute between you and your student that is unable to be resolved, you must contact the BDC International Program Coordinator for assistance. If the issue cannot be resolved readily, it can be referred to the Principal and will follow the BDC *Overseas student complaints and appeals policy* accessible on our International Students webpage under the heading 'Important links'.

In an emergency, at any time during the day, night or during the weekend, please call the BDC Round Square and International Coordinator, Mrs Karina Rothacker, on 0408 209 995.

14. Duty of Care

You must ensure that your exchange student is always appropriately supervised. The level of supervision required will vary depending on the age of your student. You must:

- ✓ Accept responsibility for students during out-of-school hours as would be expected of parents.
- ✓ Nurture and support the student where required, appropriate to their age.
- ✓ Ensure family members and visitors are respectful towards your student.
- ✓ Comply with legislation governing the use of alcohol, drugs, safety and smoking in relation to minors.
- ✓ Ensure students do not have access to literature, websites, movies and other materials that are not deemed appropriate for their age.
- ✓ Monitor your student's academic, social and recreational activities.
- ✓ Only permit your student to stay away overnight if your student has prior written approval from BDC.
- ✓ Never allow your student to be unsupervised overnight.
- ✓ Never leave your student to supervise younger children, even for a short time.
- ✓ Immediately advise us if you have any concerns for your student's health, safety or wellbeing and any suspicion of abuse and/or neglect.

15. Enjoy

Finally, this exchange experience is as much for the exchange student as it is for you and your family. Take this extraordinary opportunity to learn more about your exchange student's culture, traditions, history, people, religions, languages, music, food, ethnicity, dress/attire, holidays/holy days, etc.

Perhaps they could prepare a traditional meal from their culture one evening? Maybe everyone could celebrate one of their holy days / holidays? How about learning a traditional craft or learn a song from their culture? The ideas are truly endless, just be creative.

I hope that you, your family and your exchange student have rich and positive experiences and form lifelong friendships as our children become world prepared.

Kind regards,

Karina Rothacker
International Program Coordinator